

Public Awareness and Media Campaign

March 2006

Tobacco Facts

In 2004, nine out of 10 youth who had seen Department of Health *tobacco smokes you* ads said the ads had given them good reasons not to smoke.

More than 70,000 smokers have called the Washington Tobacco Quit Line.

The major tobacco companies spend an estimated \$18 million a year to advertise and promote their products in Washington. That advertising has shaped a youth culture that views tobacco use as glamorous, grown-up, and rebellious. Today, 45 young people in our state will start smoking every day, and one-third of them will die early as a result. The Department of Health's public awareness and media campaign is an essential part of its comprehensive program to counter tobacco industry messages, prevent kids from starting to use tobacco, and helping people quit.

Campaign history

The Tobacco Prevention and Control Program began running advertisements using a variety of media in October 2000. Each year, there are three campaigns, each directed at different audiences:

- A prevention campaign targeting youth to discourage them from starting to use tobacco.
- A quit campaign targeting adult tobacco users.
- An education campaign about the dangers of secondhand smoke.

Preventing kids from beginning tobacco use

The first youth campaign featured radio and television ads that had been used effectively in other states. In January 2002, the Tobacco Program created its own "Tobacco Smokes You" advertisements with the help of advertising and public relations experts who tested the effectiveness of messages with Washington kids. The current campaign began in October 2005 and targets 11- to 14-year-olds. With a theme of "Kissing a smoker is just as gross," the campaign features a unique micro Web site, ashtraymouth.com. The Tobacco Program also hosts a Web site, UnfilteredTV.com, where kids learn about the dangers of tobacco use and how to become active participants in the battle against tobacco companies.

Encouraging adults to quit

In June 2002, the Tobacco Program launched a made-for-Washington advertising campaign promoting the Washington Tobacco Quit Line (1-877-270-STOP). A new television, radio, and print advertising campaign has promoted the quit line each year. The goal of the cessation campaign is to reach the target audience at the point of purchase or when they're thinking of lighting up – and remind them to fight the temptation. It is directed at ages 18-49, with some college education or less, and those in the active, contemplative, or pre-contemplative phase of quitting.

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In addition, the Tobacco Program hosts the Web site, Quitline.com, where visitors can listen to a sample call to the quit line, read stories from people who have quit tobacco, learn about the physical changes they can expect once they stop using tobacco, and meet some of the Washington Tobacco Quit Line specialists.

Secondhand smoke campaign

In December 2002, the program launched a secondhand smoke campaign that featured ads developed by other states. The ads were designed to educate people about the dangers of breathing secondhand smoke and especially the dangers to children. In February 2005, the Tobacco Program created its own ads, which educate about the dangers of secondhand smoke to employees and patrons of smoking establishments. Having raised awareness about the harmful effects of secondhand smoke in workplaces during previous campaigns, the 2006 campaign educates people about the dangers of secondhand smoke in private spaces, such as in the car or in the home. The Tobacco Program also hosts the Secondhandsmokesyou.com Web site, which was launched in December 2002 to increase awareness of the dangers of secondhand smoke and promote policy change.

Visit the youth Web site at:
SeeThruTheSmoke.com

Find out more about
secondhand smoke:
SecondhandSmokesYou.com

Find out more about the
Tobacco Quit Line at:
quitline.com.

Media advocacy activities support youth media campaign

To reinforce the messages in the media campaign, the Tobacco Program supports a variety of innovative activities and efforts aimed towards youth ages 8-18. Support is provided to up to 10 county youth coalitions, guiding them in developing a strategic plan for changing smoking policies within their counties. Youth receive hands-on technical assistance in planning and talking with media and opinion leaders, and in organizing local anti-tobacco events.

A comprehensive approach to fighting tobacco use

Research shows that state anti-tobacco programs must be broad-based and comprehensive to be effective. In addition to conducting public awareness and media campaigns, Washington's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program supports programs in communities and schools, provides services to help people quit, encourages smoke-free environments, restricts the ability of kids to get tobacco, and evaluates the effectiveness of the state and local program activities.

For more information on
tobacco prevention:
www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco